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ABSTRACT

This study examined 18 physical educators' perspectives on the requisite characteristics needed for participants in physical education teacher education. Participants completed interviews, and data were analyzed using analytic induction. Interpretivism and teacher socialization theories were used to analyze the data. Participants believed undergraduates should: possess a love for physical activity; be physically fit; possess a love for children and people; and be flexible. They also believed that in order for teacher education faculty to effectively prepare teachers, they should: be credible; display a love for physical activity; and have concern for undergraduates and their development as teachers. Finally, participants believed that cooperating teachers should: exhibit a commitment to the profession; display effectiveness as teachers; and embody such personal characteristics as honesty and adaptability. The data provide teacher educators with input in three areas: the type of student who would likely be successful as a physical educator; the characteristics that make teacher educators effective; and the characteristics that lead to being an effective cooperating teacher. The data give voice to those who practice the profession of teaching physical education on the topic of the preparation of teachers for public schools. (Contains 50 references.) (Author/SM)

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Practitioners' Perspectives on Physical Education Teacher Preparation Participants

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RUNNING HEAD: Participants

Practitioners' Perspectives on

Physical Education Teacher Preparation Participants

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine practicing teachers' perspectives on the requisite characteristics needed for participants in PETE. Thus, this study investigated 18 teachers' perspectives on teacher preparation participants. The physical educators were interviewed for 90 minutes each. The interviews were audio-taped and then transcribed. The interview data were analyzed using analytic induction, which allowed the researcher to draw themes and commonalities from participant answers. Interpretivism and teacher socialization theories were used to analyze and understand the data. Practicing teachers believed undergraduates should (a) possess a love for physical activity, (b) be physically fit, (c) possess a love for children and people, and (d) be flexible. The teachers also believed that in order for teacher education faculty to effectively prepare teachers they should (a) be credible, (b) display a love for physical activity, and (c) have concern for the undergraduates and their development as teachers. Finally, the practitioners believed that cooperating teachers should (a) exhibit a commitment to the profession, (b) display effectiveness as teachers, and (c) embody particular personal characteristics such as honesty and adaptability. This study is significant for two reasons. First, the data provide teacher educators with valuable input in respect to three areas: (a) the type of student who would likely be successful as a physical education teacher, (b) the characteristics teachers believe make teacher educators effective, and (c) the characteristics that lead to being an effective cooperating teacher. Second, it gives voice to those who practice the profession of teaching physical education on a topic with which they should be intimately familiar -- the preparation of a teacher for public school.

Practitioners' Perspectives on Physical Education Teacher Preparation Participants

John Goodlad's (1990) five-year study of American teacher education programs concluded that such programs have plummeted into disarray. Through surveys, interviews and observations, Goodlad (1990) found that teacher preparation programs are falling exceedingly short of their goals to equip individuals for teaching in public schools. He attributed this situation to several problems: (a) low regard for colleges of education, (b) teacher education curriculum being decreed by the states, and (c) the priority that research is given over teaching in universities. Additionally, he stated that nobody was willing to take responsibility for the future of teacher education.

While Goodlad (1990) lamented that research has been given priority over teaching in institutions of higher education, teacher education remains the responsibility of teacher education faculty. Two ways in which teacher education faculty fulfill their research responsibilities and help improve and maintain teacher education programs are (a) conducting research on teacher education, and (b) searching the existing literature for solutions to programmatic problems. Recent reviews of teacher education research in general by Houston (1990), and particularly in physical education by Bain (1990) and Locke (1984), consistently identify four important aspects of a preparation program: participants, curriculum, governance, and evaluation. The present study follows the line of inquiry on teacher education participants.

According to Bain (1990), the research on participants in physical education teacher education (PETE) has focused on two major groups: teacher education students (undergraduates) and teacher educators. For the purpose of this study, two specific groups of teacher educators

will be discussed: university faculty and cooperating teachers. Thus, three main participant groups comprising a teacher education program include: (a) undergraduates, (b) teacher education faculty, and (c) cooperating teachers (CTs). Each party contributes to teacher preparation. The undergraduates bring their own experiences as students to physical education classes, teacher education faculty bring knowledge gained through teaching and research, and the CTs bring knowledge of teaching and learners gained from their experience as practitioners. These three sub-groups share what socialization theory (Templin & Schempp, 1990) terms a shared culture and are, in a sense, a professional society. Although Dodds (1990) argued that physical education does not have a shared technical culture, research indicates within the sub-groups of physical education are common values (e.g., love of sport, activity, teaching, coaching), knowledge (e.g., games, exercise, sport), norms, and beliefs. This is an investigation of the professional society of physical education.

If Dodds (1990) is correct, it is important to identify the values, knowledge, norms, and beliefs shared by the sub-groups within the society in order to understand the behavior found in the society (Zeichner & Gore, 1990). If there are misinterpretations and contrasts among the sub-groups about the values, knowledge, norms and beliefs of the professional society, there is a greater chance of dissonance and dysfunction within it. Eventually, this could lead to the breakdown of the profession, with each subgroup operating as an independent identity. Thus, it is important for those in PETE to know what is held in common so that the chance of dissonance and dysfunction can be limited.

Within the professional society of physical education teachers, the sub-groups develop beliefs about each other and are significant agents in the "dynamic process involving pressure to

change from various directions as individuals assume roles and learn and attempt to influence role expectations within a given social setting" (Templin & Schempp, 1990, p. 3). For example, one group, the undergraduates, is socialized by practitioners during school experience (Lortie, 1975), teacher educators during their formal experience and practitioners (again) during their practicum experiences. The second group, cooperating teachers (practitioners), have been socialized by their "apprenticeship of observation", undergraduate experiences with cooperating teachers and teacher educators. Finally, the third group, teacher educators, have been socialized as students, undergraduates, possibly (likely) as practitioners, and as PETE faculty. Thus, the insight into the roles and characteristics of the three groups is important to understanding the teacher preparation culture. This study will gather the perceptions of practitioners of the three participant groups and thus makes socialization theory appropriate as a framework for the study.

In socialization research in PETE, one voice is missing: the practitioner's. It should be of importance to those who teach and research in PETE because teachers are the foundation of the profession and seem to have the greatest influence on the next generation of teachers as colleagues and as cooperating teachers. While there have been studies that have sought the perceptions of practitioners in other subjects (e.g., O'Sullivan, Siedentop, & Tannehill, 1994; Parker, 1995; Pissanos, 1995; Smyth, 1995), none has garnered their perceptions on the participants of PETE. This voice is important because teacher socialization theory posits that teachers have a profound influence on what future teachers know and believe about teaching and teacher education (Lortie, 1975). Therefore, knowing what practitioners believe to be the values, knowledge, and skills that are necessary to teach physical education, teach in PETE programs, and act as CTs is important because they impact upon the next generation of teachers either in

the role of a teacher, colleague, or as a CT. Socialization theory also helps in explaining why practitioners feel they way they do. They have been socialized by their own biographies (Lortie, 1975), PETE programs (Graber, 1990), current work in public schools (Lawson, 1990), and possible work as a CT. All of these experiences have forged a knowledge of the requisite skills needed for teaching in the public school and training teachers for public schools. Thus, practicing teachers can provide those responsible for preparing teachers with new insight into the values, knowledge, and skills required for those who will teach in public schools. The purpose of this study was, therefore, to obtain practicing physical education teachers' perspectives on the values, knowledge, and skills required for teaching physical education and training teachers for teaching physical education.

Methods

Participants

The 18 practitioners who agreed to participate were physical education teachers from a nine-county area in the state of Georgia. The practitioner names were randomly drawn from a list of teachers provided by the executive director of the Georgia Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance (GAHPERD). Other participant names were randomly drawn from a list provided by the coordinator of physical education for Fulton County Schools and served as a source for physical education teachers who taught in urban schools. In addition, names were randomly drawn from lists of previous participants in research projects with the Sport Instruction Laboratory at the University of Georgia. The teachers were selected to represent urban, rural, and suburban schools and grade levels. The selection process was sensitive to the issues of race and gender by selecting teachers who were known to be African-

American, Caucasian, female, and male.

The selected teachers were first contacted by a letter requesting their participation, explaining the study, and indicating that they would be contacted by phone for confirmation of participation. Participants were then contacted by phone and their participation solicited.

The participants in this study reflected a diverse population. Nine of the practitioners were female and nine were male. Five of the practitioners were African-American and 13 were Caucasian. These teachers had an average of 14.5 years of physical education teaching experience. The range in years taught was 4 to 28. Seven teachers were from the elementary school level, six taught at the middle school level, and five were high-school level teachers. One teacher was a national teacher-of-the-year and one was a state teacher-of-the-year. The highest degree attained by two of the subjects was a doctorate, and over half had masters degrees. These degrees were obtained from colleges and universities that varied from small private colleges to large state universities. Over half of the sample were coaching or had coached at some point in their careers. Likewise, over half of the sample were currently serving as cooperating teachers or had at one time served as cooperating teachers.

Data Collection

The major data collection technique for this study was the qualitative interview. The appropriateness of this technique was best illustrated by Kvale (1996), who stated:

> In an interview conversation, the researcher listens to what people themselves tell about their lived world, hears them express their views and opinions in their own words, learns about their views on their work situation . . . The qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subjects' points of view, to unfold the meaning of

peoples' experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations (p. 1)

For this study, structured and semi-structured interviews were used. Socialization and a review of completed PETE research yielded a conceptual framework that identified salient aspects regarding PETE participants. This framework helped to frame both the interview questions and data analysis. This ensured that the researcher gathered practitioners' perspectives on relevant issues concerning PETE participants.

Each subject was interviewed one time for approximately 90 minutes. The interview was audio-taped, and the tapes were later transcribed. Follow-up interviews were used when deemed necessary for clarification. During each interview, the researcher took measures to remain personally uninvolved with the teacher (Mishler, 1986; Kvale, 1996). Such measures included refraining from interacting socially with the subjects. The researcher kept a personal journal (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993) that could have been reviewed by the researcher and a peer debriefer for any indication that the researcher was becoming "attached" to the subjects (Adler & Adler, 1987). The journal also served to monitor the research activities and decision making process as the study developed.

Data Analysis

Interview data were analyzed through analytic induction (Manning, 1991). The process draws themes and commonalities from data. Although analytic induction is generally considered one of the weaker forms of analysis (Patton, 1990), it provided an appropriate way to understand the experiences and thoughts of the participants. Information gathered from all interviews was compiled to form a composite of practitioners' views regarding the participants of physical education teacher preparation programs.

For the purposes of this study, four stages of analysis were followed as suggested by Huberman and Miles (1995). In the first stage, data collection, early analyses were conducted by the researcher. After the interview, the researcher took notes in his journal of some of the predominant themes that arose during the course of the interviews. These notes served as the basis of the initial analyses.

The second stage was data reduction in which the data were coded, summarized and clustered. At this point, the conceptual framework guided the coding of answers. For example, answers to questions on participants were placed into a cluster. Then common themes were drawn from those answers in order to assess teachers' perceptions of the participants of physical education teacher education programs.

The third stage of the analysis entailed data display in which "an organized, compressed assembly of information . . . permits conclusion drawing, and/or action taking" (p. 429). In this stage, the researcher placed the data into smaller forms that took on different constructs. Such constructs varied from vignettes to diagrams.

Finally, the fourth stage of data analysis was conclusion-drawing and verification. It was during this phase that the researcher attempted to make meaning of the displayed data. It was also during this stage that member checks were conducted.

Data Trustworthiness

A must in any qualitative study is addressing the issue of data trustworthiness (Patton, 1990). One way to ensure trustworthiness is by triangulating the data. Denzin (1978) identified four types of triangulations: (a) data triangulation, (b) investigator triangulation, (c) theory triangulation, and (d) methodological triangulation.

In this study, triangulation of data was done through member checks (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Member checks consisted of returning the collected data to the subjects for them to analyze. After audiotape(s) and notes of interviews were transcribed, transcripts were given back to the conversational partners for a member check. Participants were asked to read the transcripts and to verify or dispute what had been said. This allowed them to amend anything they said and/or believed to be inaccurate. As themes emerged from the data, they were checked with selected participants for comment and validation. Themes that were contradictory were brought back to participants for clarification.

In order to maximize data trustworthiness, a peer debriefer was employed to discuss the interview process with the researcher. This was done to ensure that the researcher kept the interviews focused on the research questions and did not allow the interviews to stray into a personal conversation unrelated to the topic.

Results

Utilizing interpretivist theory as a framework (Schwandt, 1994), the practitioners in this study were interviewed for their perspectives on undergraduates, teacher education faculty, and cooperating teachers. Interpretivism views experiences as of the utmost importance and socialization theory (Templin & Schempp, 1990) ascertains that practitioners have valid experiences due to the interaction of the three participant groups. Thus, the findings from this study are based on the participants' first-hand experiences with PETE participants. From interview responses, themes and commonalities emerged. These themes are reported in the following sections: (a) perspectives on undergraduates, (b) perspectives on university faculty, and (c) perspectives on cooperating teachers.

Perspectives on Undergraduates

The teachers interviewed held various perspectives on ideal characteristics that undergraduate physical education majors ought to possess to adequately meet the demands of public school physical education programs. While many physical characteristics, such as having a good, strong voice and having adequate physical skills, were thought to be necessary requirements for successful teaching, the teachers' responses focused on four themes. Two of the themes were activity-based, one was personality-based, and the other was socially-based. The themes that developed concerned the importance of undergraduates: (a) possessing a love for physical activity, (b) being physically fit, (c) exhibiting love for children and people, and (d) being flexible. In the following section each theme will be presented in more detail.

A powerful theme among the practitioners was that pre-service teachers need to have a love for physical activity. The teachers believed that if one were to teach physical education, one must have a passion for the subject matter. Just as a chef should have a love for preparing meals, the teachers felt that, since the subject matter in physical education is physical activity, fitness and sports, pre-service teachers should love engaging in these endeavors. According to the teachers interviewed, if the love of physical activity were present, then a certain level of competence in a variety of activities would likewise be present. The ability to perform these activities was desirable because it would be necessary for effective teaching. Competency in a variety of physical activities was believed to be directly linked to better teaching because visual instructions are critical in teaching physical education and because a teacher's ability to demonstrate skills to be learned corresponds to his/her instructional effectiveness. If a teacher could not provide a good demonstration, his/her effectiveness diminished. Additionally, it was

thought that a love for the subject matter would lead to teaching a wide range of curricular activities, thereby providing students with a diverse physical education program. In the eyes of the interviewed teachers, children turn to physical education teachers to provide the template for what a physical performance should look like. As one teacher said:

> I think they have to be confident in different activities. These kids want you to be Michael Jordan, so it is important to be able to do a little bit of everything.

The second characteristic that the teachers thought necessary in undergraduates was physical fitness. To be physically fit meant that one looked healthy and was able to perform a variety of tasks. Although not all teachers thought this was necessary, the majority did. To the teachers, a certain proficiency in fitness is necessary because physical education teachers should be role models for students and should demonstrate the ability to perform in a number of sports-related activities. The teachers felt that if they were to hold students accountable for being in good physical condition, then they should be in good physical condition themselves. One of the interviewees described the merit of physical fitness amongst teachers by using the analogy that the teacher is a salesperson for what he or she teaches. The teachers felt that if it was evident that the teacher took fitness seriously, then the kids would take it seriously as well. Possessing a high level of fitness was not only necessary to being a good role model, but it was also necessary in assisting in the daily rigors of teaching physical education. Some teachers believed that in order to perform their job at the highest possible level it was essential to be in good physical shape. Being in shape would keep one from becoming fatigued throughout the day and would allow a teacher to maintain a high energy level. As one teacher explained, teaching physical education is sometimes a job that requires the endurance of a marathoner:

You need to be in shape, especially if you are teaching elementary school. I taught elementary school and I worked harder there than at the high school because, if I had 30 kids, I had to be sure that I touched all 30 of those kids. Not physically, but I had to be able to tell them how they were doing. Sometimes there were 12 or 13 thirty minute classes a day. So my energy level really had to be up there. I had an example today. We had to go out and run. Well, I run with them first period. Well, when second period comes and they think I'm not trying to do it . . . so I had to run second period, and third period, and by fourth period . . . (laughter)

A third characteristic that all teachers firmly believed physical education teachers should possess was a genuine concern for the welfare of their students. It appears that, without this quality the other characteristics did not suffice. If a person did not enjoy being around people, especially children, then that person would find teaching physical education unenjoyable. Being gregarious was considered an excellent personality trait of pre-service teachers because it exhibits a love for people and, in turn, stimulates in students a desire to learn. The teachers were adamant about teachers having a regard for the students as a prerequisite for teaching physical education for two reasons. First, children are the direct beneficiaries of the work of physical education teachers. Second, if the children sense that a teacher does not care, no matter how much subject matter one knew or how physically fit he/she was, the children will not be attentive. In sum, the teachers felt that if this characteristic were absent, the teaching would not be and could not be effective.

Finally, the interviewed teachers agreed that pre-service physical education teachers need to be flexible and creative. This meant that if one were to be a quality physical education

teacher, one had to be open to differing views of subject matter, different types of students, and instantaneous changes in plans. Flexibility in terms of being open to others' views of teaching and the subject matter corresponded to the notion of being a continuous learner. Many teachers in this study believed that if one were to be a successful physical educator, one should not to be satisfied with the information learned during undergraduate education. They noted that, because the profession is continually changing, one needs to be current and willing to share ideas with others. Keeping abreast of the field allows teachers to keep their programs from becoming stagnant. To these teachers, being a continuous learner meant belonging to professional organizations, attending conferences, presenting at conferences, and reading journals. Finally, being flexible and creative entailed the ability to understand that all students will not be the same and that the children of today are not the same as the children in the past. Today's students sometimes have to deal with situations that may not be understood by someone with different experiences as a child, and recognizing this and being able to understand it is essential. One teacher described flexibility and its importance in the following manner:

> I've had to adjust. The kids of the 90s are different from the kids of the 80s and the kids of 2000 and beyond are going to be different. Kids nowadays come to school for many different reasons that we don't even know. They come because they are forced to come. They come because it is the only place they get two meals. There are some who come because if they don't come, they are going to jail. There are some who come for an education. So, you don't really know what they come from and if you aren't able to recognize and adjust, you are not going to be a very good teacher.

Another teacher expressed the need for flexibility and creativity as such:

> Budgets obviously hinder physical education teachers more than classroom teachers because you don't see too many counties or cities taking school books away from teachers, you know. That's kind of like one of their needs, although we think jump ropes and balls and stuff are our needs, but we don't always have it. So you have to be creative.

In sum, the teachers believed strongly that undergraduates who plan to teach physical education in the public schools should, first, possess a characteristic that is vital to teaching the subject of physical education: a love for sport and activity. As a part of that love, some teachers felt that a certain competence in a variety of activities was integral to teaching young people. Second, some teachers felt a certain degree of physical fitness was necessary to carry out the everyday responsibilities of a physical education teacher and to provide a positive role model for the students. Third, a love and concern for the students were overwhelmingly strong themes that resounded from the data. The teachers firmly felt that students were benefitting from the teacher and if the teacher did not care for or enjoy being around students, he or she would not and could not be effective. Finally, flexibility resonated as a requirement for physical education teachers. The teachers noted that today's child is different from the child of yesteryear and that the ability to accept differences is an essential characteristic of a physical education teacher. In addition, flexibility meant being a continuous learner and keeping up to date on recent trends within the field.

After citing characteristics of physical education teachers who could meet the demands of public school physical education, teachers provided insights regarding the recruitment of potential teachers with these characteristics. The teachers deemed these characteristics necessary and felt that it would be helpful to suggest how teacher educators could find people who possess

these characteristics. Most teachers responded by stating that the biographies of students and their apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975) were the main sources for recruiting future physical education teachers. A love for sport and activity or a positive physical education experience might be the reason a person chooses to become a physical education teacher. However, some practitioners indicated a significant influence in their lives that made them recognize their potential to become quality physical education teachers. In a sense, realizing their potential encouraged them to pursue teaching physical education as a career. As one teacher reported:

> I was fortunate to have a high school coach who told me that I would be good at [being a physical education teacher]. I mean I honestly never thought about it until he told me that I would be good at this.

Another teacher shared this story:

> My mother told me that my elementary principal said, "You know, he ought to be a PE teacher." She told that to me in high school.

One teacher thought that some people are predisposed to become physical education teachers:

> I look at it as a calling. I feel "called to the job."

Thus, the teachers felt it was important not only to identify vital characteristics of physical education teachers but to determine strategies for recruiting them as well. Although, as one teacher suggested, talented teachers are born, most agreed that assisting in the recruiting process was equally, if not more, vital.

Perspectives on Teacher Education Faculty

This section will present the teachers' perceptions of teacher education faculty. The data

revealed several consistent themes about specific qualities teacher educators should possess and noted a similarity between the characteristics for pre-service teachers and teacher educators . Three main themes emerged: (a) credibility, (b) a love for the subject matter, and (c) a concern for the undergraduates and their development.

Credibility, in the eyes of these teachers, was the most important characteristic that a teacher educator could possess. Credibility was based on the faculty member's years of experience teaching physical education. In the practitioners' opinion, if one is to teach someone else to teach, then one should have a wealth of experiences from which to draw. Being able to show one's undergraduates proof that one can teach was one way in which this credibility could be enhanced. It was not enough for a faculty member to have a great number of years experience. The faculty member's experience had to be recent, and in some cases, current and ongoing. Experienced teacher educators were important to the teachers, and to some, the modernity of their experience was even more important. Experienced teacher educators were those who had actually been teaching physical education in the public schools for a considerable amount of time. The practitioners perceived that teachers seasoned in public school education would truly "know what they were talking about." However, if teacher educators had not been in the public school for a long time, their experience counted less. The more contemporary their experience, the more substantial their impact would be upon undergraduates.

Therefore, currently engaging in activity with the public schools also accounted for experience. Teachers felt that teacher education faculty that were in the public school setting on a regular basis would be better able to provide undergraduates with a feeling of "what was going on." The following accounts are best representative of how strongly the teachers felt about this

characteristic:

> I mean, I had professors in college that hadn't been in a classroom for 25 years, and, you know, the biggest problem they had, was with a kid chewing gum. I mean today's problems are a little bit greater than that. So, they need to have their hands on the pulse of society and find out what's going on.
>
> We've got people at the university teaching teachers how to teach and they haven't been in the field in 20 years. If you did that in any other profession, it'd be a joke. I don't think you can teach people how to teach unless you have been out there.

In the estimation of some of these teachers, it would benefit teacher education faculty to teach in the public schools concurrently with the university. The teachers thought that this would make faculty more credible to the pre-service teachers and also allow them to stay in touch with what is going on in the public schools. The idea of teaching public school classes further allows undergraduates to see their teacher educators in action. This would have greater impact on undergraduates because the rhetoric of the college classroom would be coupled with application in the public school classroom. One teacher suggested:

> Well, I think they need current classroom experience. Not a week. Not 10 days every other year, but I think they need to be actively involved in some public school program all the time. I don't think that would hurt them a bit. I see a lot of things, a lot of idealistic thoughts come through here that, um, look good on paper. However, they have never dealt with the fact that we have 10 kids in the class that can't speak English, or that Dad was killed last night in a gunfight, or whatever.
>
> It should not be construed that these teachers are angry, bitter people who believe that

teacher educators are out-of-touch. All of the practitioners interviewed for this study had positive memories of their preparation as physical education teachers. More important, they had vivid memories of teacher educators who exerted an influence over them and the qualities that those teacher educators possessed that made their influence effective.

The second theme emerging from the teachers' responses was that a teacher educator had to have an immense love and knowledge of the subject matter. If a teacher educator could not exhibit a love for physical education and teaching physical education to others, then that faculty member would be neither influential nor motivating in the development of future teachers. In describing some of the more instrumental teacher educators in their lives, the teachers cited the most influential teacher educators as those who were constantly learning more about the subject matter and about the latest trends in the field. The love of the subject matter was exemplified by the enthusiastic manner in which the teacher educator presented the material. One teacher felt that the following description of one of her teacher educators best described this characteristic:

> This particular individual was a type of teacher that thought P.E. all the time. He constantly thought of new ways to do different things. I mean he listened to motivational tapes and applied that to physical education. He read books about things that were not related and took from them . . . but his love and enthusiasm . . . he's why I'm here. He was always fired up about the subject, you know, and I think that excitement and that interest motivated me.

Finally, in the minds of these teachers, personal qualities were a must if a teacher educator were to be effective in preparing teachers for today's public schools. The inclinations of most teachers were that teacher educators had to be the "whole packages" in order to reach an

undergraduate. Not only did they have to possess enormous amounts of experience and a love for the subject matter, but they had to have personal characteristics that would allow for a strong teacher-student relationship. The teacher had to genuinely care for the undergraduate and his or her development as a teacher and as a person. A few of the teachers believed this concern for the students was driven by the fact that teacher educators felt the pre-service teacher was a product of their teaching. Thus, the teacher educators did not want the pre-service teacher to fail because it would reflect upon their ability to teach. This concern also motivated the pre-service teachers to work hard not to disappoint the teacher educator. One teacher relayed a story about how the caring of a teacher educator inspired him to further his education:

> Oh, I'll never forget this guy, I had him when I was a graduate student. I was sitting there, a little bit lost about whether I should even be in graduate school. I was really insecure about my ability to pursue academics that way. He came outside and said, "How ya' doing man? It looks like you're in trouble." By him doing that, we began to talk about how I felt and how I was thinking about going home. He got me to stick around.

This particular teacher went on not only to receive his Master's degree but also his doctorate.

In contrast, teacher educators lacking interpersonal skills were not influential. The following sketch provides testimony as to why personal qualities are imperative. According to this teacher, the material taught by these particular individuals was not retained because of the way the material was presented:

> I had teachers that were just phony. They spewed out information and, really not looking at you, didn't really care whether you got it; you got enough to get by and forgot it immediately.

The teachers felt that teacher educators are important in the process of teacher preparation because they have a great influence on pre-service teachers. However, in order for teacher educators to be able to exert this influence on undergraduates, the teachers felt that teacher educators ought to manifest credibility, a love for the subject matter, and a caring demeanor toward their charges.

Perspectives on Cooperating Teachers

While not a criterion for participation in this study, some of the teachers in this study had served as cooperating teachers or were serving as cooperating teachers at the time of the study. Each had strong feelings on what a cooperating teacher should be if he or she was to be compelling. Those who had not served as cooperating teachers also had strong views on the subject because, through their own undergraduate experience, they had come into contact with cooperating teachers and felt able to determine what was necessary to be effective.

In describing desirable characteristics of cooperating teachers, the teachers in this study listed many. Some of the characteristics were similar to those they listed when talking about potential physical education teachers. Three themes emerged from the data. The teachers felt that cooperating teachers should be able to (a) exhibit a commitment to the profession, (b) display effectiveness as teachers, and (c) embody personal characteristics such as honesty and adaptability.

The consensus among the teachers was that it was especially important that cooperating teachers display a commitment to the field. Exhibiting a commitment to the field meant different things to different teachers. Commitment meant that cooperating teachers should have been in the field for period of time, be willing to spend extra time with the pre-service teachers, and do

more than just teach and go home at the end of the day.

Having experience was a fundamental component commitment. The interviewees agreed that some aspects of teaching could not be learned in the college classroom. The only way that a cooperating teacher could offer advice and guidance to a pre-service teacher was to have experienced it himself or herself. Therefore, a central theme emerging from the answers of the practitioners was that a cooperating teacher should show a commitment to the field and profession by having been a teacher for at least five years. Someone who is devoted to teaching physical education and cares about the subject will serve the pre-service teachers better than someone who is ambivalent about his/her career choice. Many felt that by this juncture in their careers, they had decided to make teaching physical education their lifelong endeavor and that if they were burnt-out, they would have left the profession. As one teacher stated:

> I think that you need somebody with several years of experience, but I would think at least five and probably closer to ten, especially in the 10-12 year range. If they're in the field for that commitment, you know that they are there to stay.

The teachers also thought the five years of experience represented other benefits to both the cooperating teacher and the pre-service teacher. They thought that experience built a knowledge base. The more experience a cooperating teacher had, the better he/she would be able to counsel a neophyte teacher. One teacher explained this in the following manner:

> You've got to grow up yourself. It's going to take you about five years to just mature to the point you can offer sound advice to someone coming in. We see people all the time. They get out of school, and the next year they get student teachers. They can't handle classes themselves. You don't need to put student teachers in those situations . . . another

thing that happens is that in five years you'll decide whether you really want to stay there.

As one teacher expressed, when searching for cooperating teachers who are committed, one must look for those who attend state and national conventions when necessary, present at conventions, and coordinate and lead extracurricular programs. Devoting time outside of the school to the profession was an indicator of a teacher who was committed to the field. Examples of such commitment given by some of the teachers included conducting public events such as 5K races or jump-rope-for-heart fund-raisers. The teachers also felt that it was necessary to place pre-service teachers with those who are not be averse to spending extra time with the pre-service teachers after school.

Secondly, the teachers felt that cooperating teachers should be effective teachers themselves. The teachers thought that in order for a cooperating teacher to be effective, one should exhibit behaviors that were in concert with the tenets of effective teaching. Additionally, they should be aware of what the students learn in their undergraduate curriculum at the university, such as management skills, mastery of the subject matter, and the ability to teach a wide range of curriculum. Many teachers felt that to teach effectively was directly related to experience in teaching and having gone through an undergraduate program. The teachers sincerely believed that if this characteristic were not present in a cooperating teacher, it could be destructive. As one teacher warned:

> Don't dare send your kid (the undergraduates) out there to somebody who is not teaching. There are a lot of people out there talking a good game who ain't doing squat when it comes to teaching. I hate to say it this way, but, you know, the old roll out the ball philosophy.

Finally, the teachers in this study felt that cooperating teachers must embody certain personal characteristics in order to have a positive effect on the undergraduates who come under their charge. Honesty, directness and being able to communicate were essential to being an effective cooperating teacher. The teachers felt that such traits were necessary because the cooperating teacher plays a vital role in the development of the pre-service teacher's (PT) confidence and abilities. If a cooperating teacher could not be honest about the pre-service teacher's abilities and about areas in which the PT should improve, it could impede the PT's progress. At the same time the teachers felt that it was necessary to be caring with the PT. If the honesty was communicated in a manner which was disparaging, it could ruin the self-confidence of the PT and possibly drive him or her out of the profession. The teachers voiced this point in the following manner:

> Cooperating teachers should not be afraid to be truthful. If you are trying to prepare this person for a lifetime of service to other people, you have to be able to be open and honest with that person and be able to tell them what their strengths are and their weaknesses are and communicate that in such a way that you don't offend that person and totally break their spirit.

Adaptability was another personal characteristic that the teachers believed a quality cooperating teacher needed to have. Adaptability meant that the cooperating teacher would allow student teachers or practicum students to come into hi/her classroom and develop their own style of teaching. Because the teachers did not view the cooperating teacher's job to be developing pre-service teachers to have identical philosophies. Such adaptability on the cooperating teacher's part was integral to his/her charges' individuality. Cooperating teachers

had to allow pre-service teachers to develop their own style, and this entailed accepting other views and ideas on how to teach the subject matter. The teachers felt cooperating teachers should be able to help somebody grow in the way that he/she needs to grow, instead of trying to make a future teacher grow in the way *they* feel he/she should grow.

In summary, the teachers felt that in order for cooperating teachers to be effective, first, they must be dedicated to the field. This would show that the cooperating teachers cared about the profession and would care about training future teachers. Secondly, they had to be effective teachers themselves. If one were to teach someone about effective teaching, then one should be able to display it. Finally, cooperating teachers had to possess certain character qualities such as honesty and adaptability. This would allow cooperating teachers the ability to provide the pre-service teacher with feedback on his or her performance and with an arena in which to develop his or her own style.

The practitioners suggested various ways in which a university person might go about finding teachers who manifest the qualities aforementioned and felt that this was vital to the process of teacher preparation. Many of the teachers agreed that great thought should be taken when deciding with whom student teachers should be working. According to a few teachers, before placing a PT, the cooperating teacher should be screened carefully. The teachers suggested interviews and systematic observations of teaching as ways in which to conduct the screening. One teacher suggested the following:

> I would observe their program for more than one day. I would do an unannounced visit just to see what's happening on a typical day. I mean everybody can put on that, I call it an "observation face." When you know the principal is coming in and you know you've

got to teach. But it's the day you're not expecting anybody and they come in and they see the same thing they would have if you were expecting them. That is the kind of teacher you need.

The overwhelming suggestion for designating skilled cooperating teachers was for a university supervisor to observe potential cooperating teachers teach and decide if they have "good" programs. The teachers provided other ways in which one could go about determining whether a potential cooperating teacher would be acceptable to receive a practicum student or student teacher. The suggestions ranged from interviewing the principals and faculty that have daily contact with the cooperating teacher to observing the cooperating teacher in action. One teacher related the process of finding a cooperating teacher to that of a college coach recruiting an athlete. He described the process:

It's kind of like recruiting an athlete. State U. came in to recruit Jim and Bob when they played for me. They came and talked to me and then went out in the building and talked to the lunchroom people and asked them what kind of people they were when they came through the lunch line. So, you have to ask other people what these teachers are like.

Finally, in respect to selecting an effective cooperating teacher, the teachers believed that in order to assure accordance between the cooperating teacher's beliefs and the university's beliefs, the university should communicate to the cooperating teacher what is expected of the practicum student or the student teacher. Additionally, the teachers thought that it was the responsibility of the cooperating teacher to take courses or workshops in duties related to being a cooperating teacher, such as supervision techniques and systematic observation instruments. Those who had acted as cooperating teachers in the past felt that communication between the

university and the cooperating teacher was lacking. They pleaded their case in this fashion:

> I've never been told exactly what the supervising teacher expects from me. Now, State U has that pretty clearly written out, but for along time that wasn't available. I think teachers need some training and some supervising skills such as working with observation tools. I had them in my masters program, but you can still be a little rusty with them.

Discussion

The results of this study lend some insight into the Socialization process and PETE by providing one sub-groups' perspectives on the skills, knowledge, and values needed by the other sub-groups in the PETE professional society. The results allow those in PETE to see the perceptions of a group who play a significant role in the socialization process and PETE. The teachers in this study identified several consistent and critical characteristics for the participants in PETE. The consensus among the interviewed teachers suggests a sense of authenticity on the teachers' perceptions, as well as a viable reliability of the perspectives on PETE programs, although each participant plays a different role in teacher preparation, participants share some universal qualities to make the preparation process significant. During the interviews, the teachers were asked about the participants of teacher education. The following discussion of the teachers' responses will be divided into three sections: (a) undergraduates, (b) teacher education faculty, and (c) cooperating teachers.

Undergraduates

The teachers believed that a love for sport and activity was a necessary characteristic for becoming a physical education teacher. This finding supports the existing literature and may

help to answer two questions posed by Dewar (1989): (a) "What do they [undergraduates/future teachers] select and interpret as important for careers in PE and why?", and (b) "What do they [undergraduates/future teachers] see as unimportant and why?" Several studies found that undergraduates in physical education exhibited a love for sport and became physical education teachers of their own volition (Templin, Woodford, & Mulling, 1982; Dodds, 1989; Dodds et al., 1992; Smith, 1993). This is significant because it further supports the theory that, as a group, physical education majors consist of former athletes and persons with active lifestyles. This, as some teachers noted, can impact recruitment which is the "first process of socialization" (Dewar, 1989, p. 41) and a integral part of PETE. If a love for sport and activity is necessary for becoming a physical education teacher in public schools, then it is incumbent upon those in the field to encourage those who may exhibit such a characteristic to pursue a career in teaching physical education.

The teachers also believed that closely related to the love of sport a certain level of competence in a variety of activities was necessary in teaching physical education. This might be explained by the possibility that physical education majors are influenced in their decision to become physical education teachers by their own physical education and athletic experiences (Hutchinson, 1993). Additionally, some teachers felt that their prior knowledge had a great impact upon their decision to become physical education teachers but that the acquisition of competence in sport and activity was not as important when completing a teacher preparation program. Such an opinion presents an interesting dilemma. If prior experiences are what influence undergraduates, then it may be that physical education as a profession is being shortchanged because not all physical education teachers have the same experiences. As a result,

a variety of personal philosophies within the professional society are being constructed. For example, if student A, whose experiences include strictly football and team sports, chooses to become a physical education teacher, he or she may only teach this type of curriculum when he or she becomes a physical education teacher. This would be the case especially if acquisition of content knowledge were deemed an unimportant part of the teacher preparation curriculum.

Previous research indicated that students who choose to become physical education teachers were of low academic aptitude and were academically inferior to those in other fields (Lawson, 1983b). The findings from this study neither support nor refute this claim; however, the teachers did consider physical fitness and athletic aptitude to be of primary importance in becoming a physical education teacher. As such, academic excellence is not viewed as a necessary requirement for teaching physical education. Such an attitude can hinder acceptance from other fields. If moderate academic standards are not valued as a qualification for becoming a physical education teacher, then a perpetuation of marginality in the schools and amongst fields is likely to continue. Although the teachers in this study were not asked specifically about academic standards for undergraduate majors, they did deem academic aptitude a necessary requirement for teaching physical education. Understanding physical education teachers' beliefs on the academic requirements for undergraduate physical education majors could be an area for future study.

Additionally, two more characteristics emanated from the interview data that were not addressed in the existing literature. First, the teachers believed that undergraduates who choose to become physical education teachers must have a love and concern for their students. Unlike a love for sport, this has yet to be addressed as a prophetic variable when it comes to describing the

physical education undergraduate and understanding the socialization process. It could be that those who choose to become physical education teachers need to have a love for children. If this is the case, then more time in practical situations dealing with children and people should be built into the undergraduate curriculum, a point which supports the research of Taggart (1988) who indicated that as many as eight field experiences are needed before student teaching. Therefore, a love for children can be fostered within the undergraduate. During these practical situations, undergraduates can discover if they possess a love for children and even foster one.

Second, the prospective teachers must be flexible. This means that undergraduates must be able to accept differences in children, be continuous learners, and remain up to date in the field. Thus, it seems logical that experiences with children of different ages, race, gender, ability, and socioeconomic status be provided to the undergraduate, as suggested by Chepyator-Thomson (1996) and Butt and Pahnos (1995). Emphasis on flexibility also entails undergraduates being required to attend workshops, in-service programs, and state, district, and national conventions. This can help socialize undergraduates and encourage their becoming continuous learners.

Teacher Education Faculty

In respect to teacher education faculty, the perceptions of the teachers supported the notion that teacher educators are important and make a difference in the lives of their students (Evertson, Hawley, & Zlotnik, 1985; Graber, 1995). Many of the teachers recalled a teacher educator who had impacted their lives and careers, thus somewhat contrasting the findings of Earls (1981) who noted that students' subjective warrants may be too strong to change by any one person or experience. However, the teachers believed that in order to make a difference in students' lives, teacher education faculty need to exhibit the following characteristics: (a) a love

for the subject matter, (b) care for the undergraduates, and (c) credibility.

Interestingly, the characteristics of having a love for the subject matter and a care for the undergraduates were strikingly consistent with the characteristics the teachers listed for undergraduates. Thus, it might be said that two of the sub-groups share values, knowledge, and skills. It is apparent that the teachers felt that these two characteristics were necessary for anyone who teaches. The love for the subject matter is significant because in some PETE programs, courses may be taught by faculty members whose teaching or research interests lie elsewhere. This is consistent with the findings of Metzler and Freedman (1985) who found that there was not a clear purpose among physical education teacher education faculty in regards to their responsibilities. For example, if a faculty member's primary interest is in exercise physiology and he/she is required to teach a methods of teaching class, the love for the subject matter might very well be absent. Therefore, in the eyes of the students, the teacher may not be effective.

The teachers did not exhibit a high regard for the amount of research that a faculty member conducted. Although one teacher regarded research as a benchmark for evaluating the worth of a program, the interviewed teachers did not deem it to be a necessary quality as it has been in other research (Mitchell, 1993). This presents an interesting quandary. In higher education, the tenure and promotion process is structured so that a large emphasis is placed on the amount of research conducted by the faculty member. Hence, it is necessary that teacher education faculty conduct research to remain employed. In addition, it is important that new information about teaching is discovered. However, the teachers felt the teaching abilities and care for the students were more important.

A unique finding from the interviews that is concurrent with Locke and Siedentop (1997)

was that the teachers believed that teacher education faculty ought to be, if possible, teaching in the public schools and university simultaneously. This would provide them with the credibility that, in the teachers' eyes, is sorely needed. While an interesting suggestion, having teacher education faculty teach in both the public school and at universities may be difficult to implement. However, it helps to address a logical question posed by Graber (1989), "Why should students [undergraduates] believe what teacher educators have to say when those mentors have had little contact with the public schools and in some cases little credibility as models of excellence in teaching?" The role of a teacher preparation faculty member is overloaded with teaching, research, service, and advising responsibilities. Teaching in the public schools at the same time may be onerous. However, it is often the responsibility of faculty members to be in public schools and physical education classes are usually accessible. Therefore, a faculty member could conceivably teach a public school physical education class for 30-60 minutes, three times a week. This suggestion has already been heeded by some researchers in the field (Byra, 1998; Coulon, 1998; Treanor, 1998) and researched. The initial findings of this research have been positive but more needs to be conducted.

The research on teacher education faculty is limited, however. As Lawson (1991) stated, any research on physical education teacher preparation faculty has merit. Thus, the significance of the findings of this study is underscored and provides possible avenues for future research. Investigating the presence of a faculty member in the public school would be a study worth conducting. Comparing the perceptions or teaching effectiveness of students who are taught by faculty members teaching their subject specialty with those who are taught by faculty members teaching out of their specialty could verify if the love of subject matter has an effect on learning.

Cooperating Teachers

Congruent to the findings of Brunelle, Tousignant, and Pieron (1981) who observed that student teachers felt that cooperating teachers (CTs) were the most influential in the student teaching experience and the socialization research (Dodds, 1989) the practitioners interviewed for this study averred that CTs were also integral in the development of prospective teachers.

More significantly, the teachers in this study provided characteristics of effective CTs. The teachers believed that CTs need to exhibit a commitment to the profession by attending workshops and conventions and by reading professional journals. When selecting CTs, teacher education faculty should look for candidates who demonstrate commitment to physical education. Thus, heeding the suggestion of Coulon and Byra (1995) who suggested that university faculty should have a communication network with CTs. This way, university faculty would be able to discern which CTs evince a commitment to the profession by keeping up with the CTs' activities themselves. Because no research has indicated that level of commitment was related to CT effectiveness, this appears to be an area for future study.

Displaying effectiveness as teachers was an additional characteristic that the practitioners felt was necessary for CTs to possess. The teachers believed that if CTs were to mentor pre-service teachers, then it would be prudent to confirm that the CT is an effective teacher him or herself. This finding supports the conclusion of Siedentop (1981) that CTs trained in distinct teaching behaviors were effective in mentoring student teachers. However, it should be noted that the CTs' perceptions of teaching effectiveness are in concert with those of the preparation program. Parker (1995) found that teachers perceived effective teaching as being marked by organization, management, discipline, and control. Although these are necessary for effective

teaching, they do not solely constitute the definition of effective teaching for the preparation program. Again, it appears from this finding that teacher preparation faculty should observe potential cooperating teachers teach and communicate with them regarding their beliefs about effective teaching *before* placing the pre-service teacher with them. Thus, a study comparing teacher effectiveness and its relation to CT effectiveness still needs to be conducted.

Finally, the teachers asserted that CTs must embody personal characteristics such as honesty and adaptability. The characteristic of being honest and adaptable coincides with the study of Rikard and Veal (1996) who found that some CTs use the "do it my way" approach. According to the teachers in this study, this was an unacceptable style to utilize when mentoring prospective teachers because the primary responsibility of the CT was only to guide the pre-service teacher in the development of his or her teaching, not to impose a style of teaching. It is also the responsibility of a CT to provide valuable feedback in an honest manner. If this is not done, the pre-service teacher could receive inaccurate feedback about his or her teaching and thereby potentially develop ineffective teaching habits.

Implications for Physical Education Teacher Preparation

The findings from this study hold several implications for the preparation of physical education teachers. The responses from the teachers lend considerable insight into how the participants in physical education teacher education can recruited, prepared, and contribute to the production of quality physical education teachers for the public schools.

Hold Undergraduates Accountable for Being Physically Fit

The teachers in this study strongly believed that physical education teachers should be physically fit and serve as role models for their students. Therefore, holding undergraduates to

standards of physical fitness appears prudent. If it is important that teacher preparation programs produce teachers who are physically fit, then programs should hold pre-service teachers likewise accountable for being so. Math teachers are expected to display proficiency in their particular subject matter. Therefore, since fitness is a major segment of the subject matter, it is only logical that physical education teachers be held accountable for being current and familiar with their subject matter. The teachers did not imply that physical education teachers should be elite athletes, but they should at least be able to display a modicum of physical fitness in order to be role models for their students. Additionally, the teachers believed it was important to be physically fit due to the demands of teaching physical education. A large part of teaching physical education is performing tasks for instructional purposes; therefore, a level of fitness is necessary for accomplishing this important task of teaching. A study conducted by Melville and Cardinal (1997) supports the notion of keeping undergraduates accountable for being physically fit. They found that in three of four scenarios, less qualified candidates were hired over candidates with higher grades based on a better physical condition.

Visibility of Teacher Educators in the Public Schools Should Be Increased

According to the teachers, credible teacher educators would be most influential in preparing future teachers. Credibility was based on the number of years teaching and time spent in the public schools. The teachers believed that a teacher educator who had recent teaching experience in public schools would have the greatest credibility with undergraduates (it may even be safe to assume that they would with cooperating teachers as well). With the time demands on teacher educators, it may not be possible to teach in the public schools on a regular basis. However, teacher educators could increase their experiential bases by spending more time

in the schools observing and possibly teaching a class once-a-week. This would allow teacher educators to demonstrate their knowledge and skills for teaching students in the public schools.

Carefully Examine Cooperating Teacher Selection

According to the teachers, choosing a CT who is committed to the profession, effective as a teacher, and honest and adaptable is essential to making the pre-service teacher's experience meaningful. If pre-service teachers are placed under the tutelage of a CT who possesses these characteristics, their preparation would be enhanced. Therefore, it appears necessary for teacher educators to choose, with the utmost care, CTs under whom to place their charges. For teacher educators, this means observing CTs teach and interviewing them about their beliefs on and perceptions of regarding the CTs role. To aid in the assessment of CTs, the teachers prescribed interviewing the principals and others in the school about the prospective candidates. This appears to require much work for the teacher educator but, according to the teacher, is critical for success in the training of teachers.

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